

# Visual arts teacher honored

## Receives national award at event in Washington

By James Niccolai  
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DUXBURY — When Virginia Freyermuth began teaching in Duxbury eight years ago, only 35 of the town's 1,200 students took art classes.

Because of her work and her conviction that art is a vital tool for teaching children about themselves and the world around them, that number is now 640 — and rising.

Freyermuth's efforts were recognized Wednesday when she received the Outstanding Visual Arts Educator award at the American Teacher Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Such well-known people as actors Harrison Ford and Richard Dreyfuss presented hefty trophies to 12 of the nation's finest educators. The ceremony was broadcast nationwide on the Disney Channel.

Before Freyermuth's name was announced for the award, which was presented by Jane Alexander, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Duxbury teacher had no idea she had won it.

"I was very surprised and very moved," Freyermuth said. "I am very honored. It's more than just an award; it's a responsibility to be a spokesperson for arts educators all over the country. I know how hard they work, and when classes are cut from schools, arts classes are too often the first to go."

Freyermuth, who is listed in this year's "Who's Who of American Women" and was named Massachusetts Teacher of the Year in 1994, has been a teacher for 22



Associated Press

Jane Alexander, left, actress and chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Arts, presents the Outstanding Visual Arts Educator award to Duxbury teacher Virginia Freyermuth.

## Duxbury

years, the last eight years at Duxbury High School. She lives with her family on Canterbury Drive in Plymouth.

Freyermuth said she expanded the Duxbury arts curriculum by first teaching the value of the subject to the community and then convincing students that art is "a place where real learning happens."

She went to Washington with her husband a week ago, when three finalists from each of 12 teaching

areas gave a presentation before a panel of judges made up of the heads of several national education groups.

"It was nerve-racking and exhilarating," Freyermuth said. "I told them I thought one person could really make a difference and make change happen."

"I don't know how judges put one person above another. All the colleagues I met there were exemplary educators."

The festivities didn't stop when Freyermuth boarded the plane home yesterday afternoon. When

she arrived at Logan Airport, a small reception awaited her.

"I came out of the arrivals gate not expecting anything, and suddenly I saw all these balloons and people were cheering and waving a banner. There were a lot of administrators and school committee members as well as my children. It was a total surprise."

Freyermuth graduated from Duxbury High School in 1969. She won first place in drawing in the Massachusetts Art Teachers Exhibition in 1992 and 1993 and was named outstanding Art Educator in Massachusetts by the state's Alliance for Art Education in 1989.